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Budget trauma

You can understand Providence Mayor David Cicilline's and other Rhode Island city and town leaders' irritation about being stuck with hefty — and unexpected? — costs because of the legislature's fairly late decision to level-fund state education aid to communities.

The legislature tends to make important decisions very late in the session, thus preventing those most affected from doing adequate planning — which in turn drives up local costs even more through inefficiency.

As for the local taxpayers who will now get stuck with higher property taxes and reduced services, they should bear in mind that much of these costs are due to extravagant pension and insurance deals with public employees, which sharply reduce localities' ability to finance public services.

Perhaps this year's trauma will force cities and towns to be more disciplined. And maybe it will lead citizens to press their delegates on Smith Hill to do business more promptly.